

Experience Munich's colorful history

Living in Bavaria provides easy travel to quite a few of Europe's "must-see" cities.

Munich is one of these cities.

Germany's third largest city and the capital of the German Federal State of Bavaria was first mentioned in writing in 1158, and became an official city, complete with fortification, in 1175. There was settlement in the Munich area during Roman times, however, so it is likely that the famed city is even older.

Munich is located near the Alps, so visitors are advised to bring an umbrella and a jacket, no matter what season, because the weather can change rapidly and unexpectedly.

The city offers many historically important and artistically attractive sites, makes an excellent vacation destination, or due to its close proximity an opportunity for fun-filled day trips.

One of the most well known sites in Munich is the **Frauenkirche**, located in the city center. It serves as the cathedral for the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising. Construction started on the Frauenkirche in 1468, and it took 20 years to complete it. The towers were added later, in the 16th century. Though Munich underwent extensive bombing during World War II, the two towers survived, making them more than 500 years old.

Standing at 99 meters high, they serve as the marker for building height limitations. No building within the Munich city limits can be taller than the towers.



The Rathaus and the Frauenkirche are two of the most prominent architectural features in Munich. To make traveling easier, an entrance to Germany's largest S-bahn system is located in the Marienplatz in front of the Rathaus.

After World War II, Munich had to decide how to rebuild. The city had to make the important decision on which style the rebuilt buildings would take. Should they be restored to their original designs, or should they reflect modern architecture?

After much debate, the old buildings that were damaged by bombing were rebuilt in their original style.

The city center is called the **Marienplatz**, named for the Mariensaeule, or Marien Column, which is the center column of the city hall building. The city hall, in German called the **Rathaus**, is worth a visit as well. The **Glockenspiel**, or clock, located in the front of the Rathaus puts on a show at several intervals throughout the day.



Breweries like the famous Hofbrauehaus provide traditional Bavarian entertainment to dine by, and are more visited for their beer than their food.

The Glockenspiel does not “come alive” every hour, so check the times posted in front of the Rathaus, and be sure to get to the courtyard early to enjoy the show!

An information desk for tours and attractions around Munich is also in the Rathaus, so if you don’t know where to start, this would be a good place to get ideas or more information about a city tour.

Located in the basement of the Rathaus is the **Ratskeller**, which in my opinion is one of the best restaurants Munich has to offer. The menu offers traditional German cuisine and excellent service. There is even a small pub area where patrons can enjoy an afternoon break and sip a Weissbier, or white beer, that Munich is known for.

Near the Marienplatz is the **Peterskirche**, the oldest church in the inner city. It was built before 1158 by an early settlement of monks.

Other churches of interest in Munich include Michaelskirche, which is the largest Renaissance church north of the Alps and the Theatinerkirche, whose dome dominates the Odeonplatz. The Theatinerkirche was built in the Italianate high baroque style, which greatly influenced southern Germany baroque.

Also near the Marienplatz is one of the most famous breweries in Munich, the **Hofbraeuhaus**. Operated since 1589, it is host to much of Germany’s history, including providing a place for Hitler to speak and the second largest tent in Oktoberfest, which Munich is probably most well-known for.

Oktoberfest, which is a two week festival beginning in September and ending the first Sunday in October, was first held October 12, 1810, to celebrate the wedding of the crown prince Ludwig to Princess Therese von Sachsen-Hildburghausen.

Another popular attraction in the downtown area is the **Residenz palace**. Began in 1385, the palace now serves as one of Europe’s most significant museums of interior decoration. Even the entrance doors are meticulously sculpted, making it well worth a visit.

Next door to the Residenz is the **National Theater**, where several of Richard Wagner’s operas premiered for Ludwig II of Bavaria. There are many other theaters in Munich that showcase the value the city places on the arts.

You will probably also stumble upon street performers as well, which offer an eclectic array of music, street drawings, and dramatic arts.

Also of interest, though quite a walk from the main downtown area, is the **English Gardens**, one of the largest urban public parks in the world. If you are taking an extended vacation to Munich and are looking to get away from the city noise to relax, this is the place to do it. There are even four beer gardens located within the English Gardens.

You may also want to visit the **Hofgarten**. The Hofgarten is near the Residenz, and is the city's oldest park. The Dome of the State Chancellery is located in the center of the garden.

Other draws include Munich's many museums, one of the most prominent being the **Deutsches Museum**, which displays the first TV from 1930. Germany's first exhibition of electricity was also held in Munich.

Munich has the strongest economy of any German city.

The citizens enjoy a high quality of life and a low crime rate. There is also a very extensive public transportation system, which includes Germany's largest S-bahn.

The city has the second largest airport in Germany, the Franz Josef Strauss International, so flying in or out of the city is no problem. Munich is conveniently located.

The famed concentration camp Dachau is only a short drive outside the city.

For soccer fans, the World Cup has been held in Munich twice, once in 1974, the second time in 2006. The 1972 Summer Olympics were also held there.

For more information on the city, visit <http://www.muenchen.de/>, and click on the British flag for English text.

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Fortification was added to make the city of Munich official in 1175.



This building at the entrance to Munich's downtown area displays the typical architectural design of Munich. It also houses a large McDonald's on the first floor, something that can be a familiar site for overwhelmed American travelers.